









THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
MFA FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION

by

YAM KWAN LAU

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF FINE ARTS


IN

PAINTING

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 1994



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2024 with funding from  
University of Alberta Library

<https://archive.org/details/Lau1995>

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend  
to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a  
thesis entitled:

Final Visual Presentation

submitted by YAM KWAN LAU

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master  
of Fine Art.



DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

GRADUATE STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

I hereby release the following works for incorporation into the University Collections, University of Alberta, as part of the Master of Fine Arts Thesis Collection:

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>MEDIUM</u>	<u>SIZE</u>
Blue Mirror	1994	Acrylic mylar	





The University of Alberta

RELEASE FORM

NAME OF AUTHOR YAM KWAN LAU  
TITLE OF THESIS FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION  
DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS GRANTED MASTER OF FINE ARTS  
YEAR THIS DEGREE WAS GRANTED 1994

Permission is hereby granted to THE UNIVERSITY OF  
ALBERTA LIBRARY to reproduce single copies of this  
thesis, and to lend or sell such copies for private,  
scholarly, or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves other publication rights, and  
neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may  
be printed or otherwise reproduced without the  
author's written permission.





Within the Modernist tradition, the quest for the religious absolute is identical with the drive towards purity and immediate presence. Through systematic negation, the contingent and extraneous is removed. The search for religious content within the purist paradigm amounts to an exclusion of difference. Three painters: Malevich, Newman, and Reinhardt, represent for me the most sustained efforts in this direction. "Infinite Proximity" is both an extension and critique of this tradition.

While employing Modernist vocabulary, "Infinite Proximity" challenges the essentialist approach by exploring the 'other' of presence. This project locates a religious dimension in the irreducible 'other' ---- a primordial difference which constitutes presence and yet is repressed by it. The 'other' cannot be essentialized but can be intimated through an encounter with the works. In this context, three groups of work: The Face, The Mirror and The Book are positioned as interrelated sites where the encounter with the other is enacted. This encounter is the subject matter of the work:

#### The Face

The individual work in this group approximates the size of the human face. Together the paintings constitute an environment that solicits a face to face encounter with the viewer. The mirror simultaneously reflects and bars the reflection of the viewer's face. The wax, a simulation of human skin, initiates the inter-weaving play between the inside and outside layers of dots. Both are strategies to engage and refuse the fixation of the gaze. As a result, the paintings assert their own irreducible thingness as the faces of the other.

#### The Mirror

The Mirror disrupts the autonomy of the monochrome. This strategy reformulates the sublime as the absolute other which solicits a phenomenological dialogue with the self. In the process of reflection, the work's space is also the body's space. The reflected self is tainted and doubled by the mirror, while its trace is split by the stripe. This process is intended to problematize modern subjectivism in which the certainty of cognition depends on a unified image of the self as reflected in objects. Since the mirror disrupts this image, it remains to be the other which exceeds the self.

#### The Book

The Book stages the encounter between the material presence of paint and its other, text. Through the application of Derrida's logic of supplement, text is posited as an absence that inhibits the "inside" of the painted surface. This contamination of text opens the closure of the purist notion of material. Moreover, in the process of reflection, The Book (text/paint) as an entity is further deconstructed, opened to further readings as an image.

*Yurken 1994*



